

'Deeply disturbing' development

Barrage of abusive missives turns skatepark row nasty

✦ Bianca Healey

A raft of abusive and offensive letters of objection submitted at the 11th hour against a children's skatepark set to be built at an eastern suburbs park have turned a passionate neighbourhood debate ugly.

The decade-long plans to create a youth recreation facility at Rushcutters Bay Park have pitted young families against established residents opposed to development on a rare patch of extensive green space.

Woollahra councillors were left in disbelief by personal attacks by letter writers and accusations the skatepark would attract drug dealers and paedophiles.

Councillor Sarah Swan, who had previously voted against the proposed skate-

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park in light of the park's recent heritage listing, said the level of vitriol contained in the submissions must be put on the public record.

“I am so deeply concerned by this late correspondence,” Ms Swan said. “The fact that members of our local community have the audacity to make these

kinds of allegations in relation to children under the guise of protectionism – I'm deeply disturbed by it.”

Ms Swan referred to letters which suggested the skatepark, which was designed to cater to children aged eight to 14, would attract graffiti, aggressive behaviour, drug users and dealers to the area.

“Has anyone gone to Double Bay recently? To suggest that a skatepark is needed to facilitate drug use in our area is ridiculous,” she said.

Councillor Matthew Robertson called the letters “outrageous and unacceptable” and councillor Nicola Grieve said she was “disturbed” by the correspondence and called for the council to examine if the communication breached its standards.



A Rushcutters Bay skatepark proposal has divided the community.

Councillor Sean Carmichael, on record as a strong opponent of the skatepark, alluded to “upsetting” homophobic comments that had been directed to council via the letters, stating he hoped never to see the language – which was “deeply insulting as a homosexual

sitting in this chamber” – again.

The correspondence has not yet been made available but will be released to the public in the council's meeting minutes. Several councillors noted the majority of letters were “well considered” and respectful.

The proposed skatepark was most recently tabled with council in 2018 and is set to be located on the southeast corner of Rushcutters Bay Park, with small-scale skate facilities and a basketball zone along with shade and shelter structures.